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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000697

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: (C) EU TRIKA DEMARCHES CROATIAN MFA REGARDING  
ARTICLE 98

REF: STATE 65956

Classified By: DCM G. T. DELAWIE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) European Union troika ambassadors told the MFA last week that signing an article 98 agreement with the United States would jeopardize Croatia's accession to the EU, an MFA official (protect) told the DCM June 7. The EU ambassadors told Assistant Minister for the European Union and European Cooperation Damir Kusen that concluding an article 98 agreement with the US would jeopardize closing the Justice and Home Affairs chapter of the EU aquis.

2. (C) The MFA official characterized the demarche as "rather over the top," and said it was not clear whether it was on instructions from Brussels or national capitals, or was a purely locally-driven effort.

3. (C) In the run-up to the May visit to Croatia of VP Cheney, there was considerable newspaper speculation that the US and Croatia would sign an article 98 agreement during the visit. This coverage may have led to or contributed to the demarche. The draft Defense Cooperation Agreement (reftel) has not yet appeared in the press.

FRANK